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**March 20, 2019**

The Daily Mississippian

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NO. 20 OLE MISS BASEBALL  
TOPS ARKANSAS PINE-BLUFF

Mike Bianco and the Rebels set out to continue their momentum against the Golden Lions in the first of two midweek non-conference matchups at Swayze Field on Tuesday night.

SEE [THEDMONLINE.COM](#) FOR COVERAGE

ASSOCIATED STUDENT BODY

DEBATE

Hosted by Student Media

MONDAY,  
MARCH 25  
6PM

OVERBY AUDITORIUM

STUDENT MEDIA PREPARES TO  
HOST ASB CANDIDATES DEBATE

Ole Miss student journalists will moderate the ASB debate on Monday at 6 p.m. in the Overby Center auditorium. See the DM's social media to submit questions you'd like candidates to answer.

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# Active Minds speaks up about suicide prevention

MCKENZIE RICHMOND  
[THEDMNEWS@GMAIL.COM](#)

Active Minds's Send Silence Packing exhibit covered the Grove with backpacks on Tuesday to memorialize the approximately 1,100 college students across the nation who die by suicide every year, according to the American College Health Association.

The University of Mississippi chapter of Active Minds, a non-profit organization that raises awareness about mental health, teamed up with the National Active Minds Organization based in Washington, D.C. to create the visual display. The display, which aimed to raise awareness about mental health and suicide on college campuses, included backpacks and tables lined with pamphlets.

Katherine Sistrunk, chairman of the local Send Silence Packing event for Active Minds, said the purpose of the event is "to start conversation and stop the stigma of mental health."

The University of Mississippi's Active Minds chapter first brought the exhibit to campus in 2018, making this the group's second year to host the Send Silence Packing event. The traveling exhibit is hosted on 30-40 campuses each year, depending on the requests sent in by universities.

"The program is designed to raise awareness about the incidence and impact of suicide,

connect students to needed mental health resources, and inspire action for suicide prevention," Sistrunk said.

Sistrunk believes that the campus and community have become more open to the conversation about mental health since the 2018 exhibit. She said that when she was a freshman, the conversation was subdued, and she thinks events like this have increased student awareness and encouraged people to speak up about mental health.

"Send Silence Packing catalyzes conversations in a way that contributes to a community's overall positive climate for mental health and encourages people to seek out helpful resources for themselves, friends or loved ones," Sistrunk said.

Right Track Medical Group and Communicare, two counseling centers in the Oxford area, came to support the event and set up tables beside the exhibit to offer advice and resources. Representatives from the University Counseling Center and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention were also present.

The event was co-sponsored by Right Track, which emphasizes outpatient behavioral health treatment by providing therapy and medication management services, in addition to several on-campus organizations, including the Associated

SEE **ACTIVE MINDS** PAGE 3



TOP PHOTO: CHRISTIAN JOHNSON

The University of Mississippi chapter of Active Minds scattered backpacks across The Grove yesterday to raise awareness about suicide and mental illness.

BOTTOM PHOTO: KATHERINE BUTLER

The goal of Active Minds is to start productive conversations about and to end the stigma around mental illness.



# Vitter among finalists for head of Florida university

TAYLOR VANCE  
[THEDMNEWS@GMAIL.COM](#)

Former Ole Miss Chancellor Jeffrey Vitter could become the next president of the University of South Florida following his abrupt resignation from the Lyceum earlier this academic year.

Vitter has been selected as one of four finalists for the position of president of

USF, according to a press release from the university. The press release indicates that the USF Board of Trustees hopes to select a president from the field of four by Friday afternoon. Vitter will interview with the USF search committee this Wednesday and with other relevant campus groups throughout the week.

"At the conclusion of the interviews, the (Board

of Trustees) hopes to choose a new president during a meeting that will begin at approximately 3 p.m. on Friday, March 22 in Traditions Hall," the press release reads. "The president-elect must then be confirmed by the Florida Board of Governors (BOG), which oversees the 12-member State University System. The confirmation is scheduled for Thursday,

March 28 during the BOG meeting in Tallahassee."

Vitter resigned from his position as chancellor of the University of Mississippi in November amid public concerns regarding his responses to social media posts from within the Ole Miss community and on the heels of two years of declining enrollment.

Les Muma, chair of the USF presidential search

committee, declined to comment on whether Vitter's sudden departure from the University of Mississippi worried the university and the search committee.

"Out of respect for our interview process that will take place throughout the week, it would be inappropriate for me to

SEE **VITTER** PAGE 3



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AP PHOTO: MARK BAKER

High school students embrace at a floral tribute at the Botanical Gardens in Christchurch, New Zealand, Tuesday, March 19. Christchurch was beginning to return to a semblance of normalcy on Tuesday. Streets near the hospital that had been closed for four days reopened to traffic as relatives and friends of Friday's shooting victims continued to stream in from around the world.

COLUMN

# Standing up against hate, having a voice



**LOGAN SCOTT**  
THEDMOPINION@GMAIL.COM

Musician and performance artist Alex Cameron wrote in his song "Politics of Love," "There ain't no politics in love." While Cameron may be right on an individual basis, in the grand scheme of things, politics and love are very much intertwined. This has been evident in recent years in the varying responses of our leaders here in the U.S. to growing divisions between classes, races and political parties. But now that white supremacy has afflicted New Zealand with tragedy, we can compare the responses of the country's citizens and leaders to those of our own.

No one should attempt to deny the tragedy of the deaths of 50 people. Some have tried, and there has been adequate lambasting of these characters. The effort by some to use this attack on a religious group to further ostracize its members is being met with resistance all over. New Zealand is trying to strengthen its gun laws to prevent such a tragic occurrence from happening again. Its last shooting was in 1997, so these measures would not require the Herculean strength they would require to be effective in our country.

This is where our countries begin to differ. Jacinda Ardern, New Zealand's prime minister responded with an outright condemnation of white supremacy and embrace of the Muslim community. New Zealand's legislature immediately began to enact gun laws with the aim of preventing tragedy. President Trump continues his streak of denying his own administration's statistics of the growing internal threat that white supremacist terrorism poses.

Trump's travel ban, which targets mostly nationals of a handful of predominantly Muslim countries, still stands, and many in the GOP refuse to change the status quo on gun laws.

But the most insidious threat to our nation is not new, concrete or ideologically driven. It is by its very nature silent, voiceless. It is the desire to stay in the past. It is the want to retreat from any debate deemed too divisive. It is the belief that things today are as they always were and that the only way to combat hate is to ignore it and a complete disregard of the fact that this attitude is what allowed it to grow in the first place.

The shooter's ideology came from the internet. He was fueled by "alt-lite" and "alt-right" YouTubers and speakers. I am not blaming these figures for the atrocity, but I want to illustrate that they are responsible for what they say and how they say it. All it took to propel the shooter to terrorism was memes. He became entrenched in

the white nationalist ideas of "white replacement" that are continually propped up by the majority of far-right internet communities.

No one but the shooter is to blame for the shooting, but these communities are allowed to spread their vitriol and hate and disguise them as harmless dog whistles, although, in reality they are the tools they use to reach out to others and indoctrinate them.

Until social media companies are actually held accountable, this will continue. Until we begin to see that remaining on the sidelines of our culture does not resolve us of responsibility, this will continue. The status quo being the status quo does not mean it is right. It does not mean it cannot change. But if we do not force ourselves to become involved in our lives, none of this will change.

*Logan Scott is a freshman film production major from Madison.*

## THE DAILY MISSISSIPPIAN

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The Daily Mississippian welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should be e-mailed to dmletters@olemiss.edu.

Letters should be typed, double-spaced and no longer than 300 words. Letters may be edited for clarity, space or libel. Third-party letters and those bearing pseudonyms, pen names or "name withheld" will not be published. Publication is limited to one letter per individual per calendar month.

Letters should include phone and email contact information so that editors can verify authenticity. Letters from students should include grade classification and major; letters from faculty and staff should include title and the college, school or department where the person is employed.



MISSISSIPPI  
**press**  
ASSOCIATION

MEMBER NEWSPAPER



# ACTIVE MINDS

*continued from page 1*

Student Body, Alpha Tau Omega, Chi Omega and Kappa Kappa Gamma.

“With the increasing rates of depression and anxiety in the

18- to 22-year-old age group, awareness and knowledge of resources is so important,” Right Track outreach director Carol Ann Hughes said.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 1 in 4 people between the ages of 18 and 24 has a diagnosable mental illness, and more than 25 percent

of American college students have been diagnosed or treated by a professional for a mental health condition within the past year.

Sistrunk said she wants Send Silence Packing and other events hosted by Active Minds to continue opening the discussion about mental health in a way that helps students

without stigmatizing the problems they face.

“It’s like a primer,” Sistrunk said. “This exhibit is a supplemental thing to what’s going on and to keep the conversation going.”

The University Counseling Center is located on the third floor of Lester Hall and accepts

walk-in appointments from noon to 4:15 p.m. Monday through Friday. Students can call (662) 915-3784 to schedule an appointment. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-8255, offers a confidential service to help people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.

# VITTER

*continued from page 1*

discuss each individual candidate at this time,”

Muma said in an email to The Daily Mississippian. “We look forward to speaking with all of the finalists.”

The other three finalists are Wanda Blanchett, interim

provost & executive vice chancellor for academic affairs at Rutgers University-New Brunswick; Steve Currall, provost and vice president for academic affairs at Southern Methodist University and Debasish (Deba) Dutta, distinguished professor of engineering & former chancellor at Rutgers University–New Brunswick.

“Each finalist has a broad range of academic leadership experience, including at institutions that belong to the prestigious Association of American Universities (AAU),” the press release read.

USF has an enrollment of approximately 50,000 students, twice the number of students enrolled at Ole Miss.



FILE PHOTO: MARLEE CRAWFORD

Former University of Mississippi Chancellor Jeffrey Vitter has been selected as a finalist for the position as president at University of South Florida.

Vitter has continued at the university as a distinguished professor in the computer science department. He has been conducting research for the university and has not taught a class in his

half-semester as a faculty member.

Vitter and the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning could not be reached for comment.

ASSOCIATED STUDENT BODY

DEBATE






hosted by Student Media


MONDAY,

MARCH 25

6PM

OVERBY AUDITORIUM





The Ole Miss Commencement Expo is a special event planned to assist you with all your needs as graduation approaches. The Office of University and Public Events encourages your participation in this important event.

Galtney Plaza (Business Row) | rain location: Union Ballroom

Tuesday | **March 19** | 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Wednesday | **March 20** | 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Thursday | **March 21** | 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

For additional questions, please contact University and Public Events.  
(662) 915-7318 | [events@olemiss.edu](mailto:events@olemiss.edu)

[commencement.olemiss.edu](http://commencement.olemiss.edu)

## PLAYLIST OF THE WEEK: ***SPRING IS (ALMOST) HERE***

ADAM DUNNELLS  
THEDMFEATURES@GMAIL.COM

- ♪ **The First Days Of Spring**  
Noah And The Whale • The First Days Of Spring
- ♪ **Spring Vacation**  
The Beach Boys • That's Why God Made the Radio
- ♪ **The Greatest**  
Kenny Rogers • Discovery Vaults
- ♪ **Spring Is Here**  
Frank Sinatra • The Columbia Years (1943-1952): The Complete Recordings: Volume 8
- ♪ **The Pop Singer's Fear of the Pollen Count - 1999 Best Of Version**  
The Divine Comedy • A Secret History... The Best Of The Divine Comedy
- ♪ **Spring Haze**  
Tori Amos • To Venus And Back
- ♪ **Spring Is Here**  
Ella Fitzgerald • Ella Fitzgerald Sings The Rodgers And Hart Song Book
- ♪ **Some Gave All**  
Billy Ray Cyrus • Some Gave All
- ♪ **Cherry Blossom Girl**  
Air • Talkie Walkie
- ♪ **Spring**  
Saint Etienne • Foxbase Alpha
- ♪ **March Madness**  
**EXPLICIT** Future • March Madness
- ♪ **Spring Affair**  
Donna Summer • Four Seasons Of Love (Reissue)
- ♪ **Spring Breakdown**  
Luke Bryan • Spring Break...Checkin' Out
- ♪ **Season Suite: Late Winter, Early Spring (When Everybody Goes To Mexico)**  
John Denver, Mike Taylor, Dick Kniss • Rocky Mountain High
- ♪ **Here Comes The Sun - Remastered 2009**  
The Beatles • Abbey Road (Remastered)

Even though Mississippi weather seems to change on an hourly basis, spring actually does start today. This spring playlist will get you in the proper mindset for the change of the season.

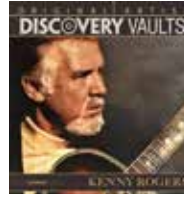


PHOTO COURTESY: SPOTIFY

Even though it began in winter, Major League Baseball's spring training is in full swing now, and every team is gearing up for the 2019 season. This country song is all about America's favorite pastime.



PHOTO COURTESY: SPOTIFY

While many people remember Easter as a spring holiday, not everyone remembers Memorial Day, a day when we celebrate and remember the men and women who served the country, which falls on May 27 this year. This song is about those brave citizens who we remember on that day.



PHOTO COURTESY: SPOTIFY

MLB's spring training isn't the only sports event happening: March Madness kicked off yesterday. This 2015 Future song is all about the NCAA men's basketball finals.

# REBEL RADIO

THE VOICE OF OLE MISS

# 92.1



TAKE A STUDY BREAK  
PICK UP THE DM



# She works in advising, but her impact goes beyond

**JANAE HUDSON**  
THEDMFEATURES@GMAIL.COM

As advising season begins, many students feel the stress of signing up for classes and the possible dread of changing majors. The rush to schedule advising meetings and ensure that holds are removed can make any student nervous.

Many of these anxieties about the future are laid to rest in Howry 308, where Jackie Certion, assistant director for the FASTrack program, can be found amid the constant ringing of phones and keyboard clicks.

FASTrack is a program for first-year students that provides smaller class sizes and individualized advising to members to help them transition from high school to college.

Certion is constantly busy during advising season. The gold and royal blue decorations in her office create a warm atmosphere that eases the minds of the dozens of skittish students who enter daily.

Advising may be a stressor to some, but to Certion, advising is a time to get to know students and help push them beyond their goals while attending the University of Mississippi.

“It can be hectic because I try to have as many students as possible before the registration window,” she said. “Getting them in before the window opens can be sometimes tedious.”

Certion added that students also come to her when the path to graduation seems uncertain or bleak.

“I love helping students through those decision-making processes when they come in a certain major and letting them



PHOTO COURTESY: OLE MISS COMMUNICATIONS

know that it is completely okay to change their major,” she said. “Because at 17 or 18 years old, do you really know what you want to do with your life? Probably not.”

Though her job consists of teaching EDHE courses and guiding students down their academic paths, she said her joy stems from being a person that students can rely on at any time.

“I would like to think that I have a great relationship with students,” Certion said. “I love having students that are sophomores, juniors and seniors who still come to me not just for academic advising but just to talk about life. Having them feel like I am a confidante, an advocate and a resource that they can use beyond their freshman year means the world to me.”

Outside of her office, students view Certion as a motherly figure who gives advice in times of need.

Certion recently received the Black Student Union’s Guiding Light Award. This award is given to a faculty or staff member who not only helps students on campus achieve their goals in and out of the classroom but

also guides them to greatness after graduation.

Certion also serves as an adviser for UM ESTEEM, the Alpha Beta chapter of Omega Phi Alpha and the Xi Zeta chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.

Candace Bolden, a sophomore biochemical engineering major, said her experiences with Certion have always been positive.

“Mrs. Jackie started her influence in my life as a FASTrack adviser,” Bolden said. “I had an extremely hard freshman year, and she would always give me encouraging words.”

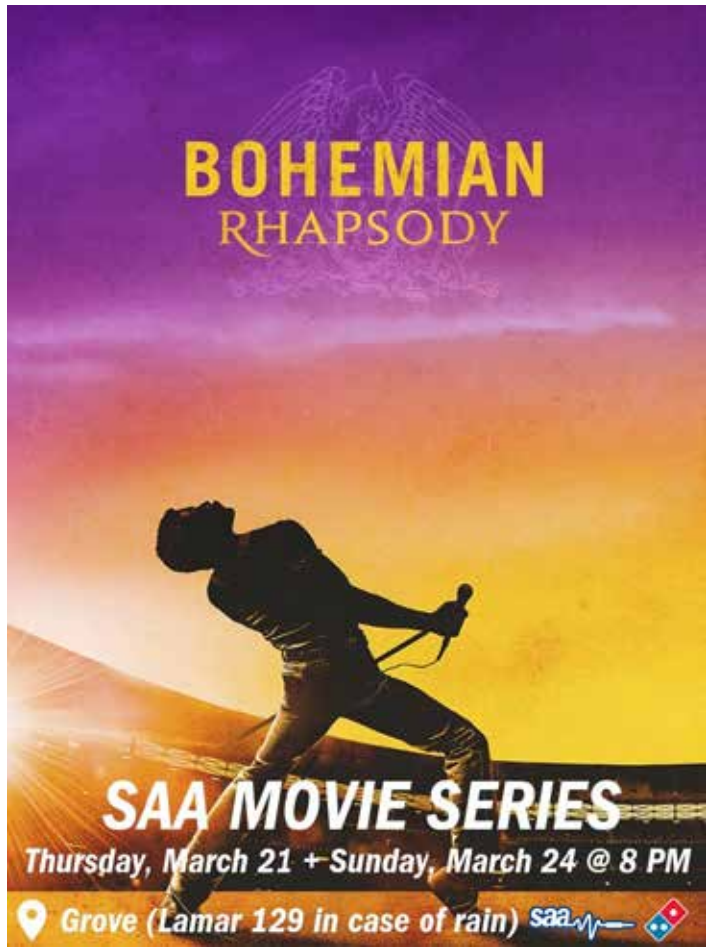
Bolden referred to Certion as a “second mom.”

“I talk to her about anything. She corrects me when I need correcting,” Bolden added. “Then she focuses on teaching me how to celebrate myself, which is one thing black women — sometimes women, in general — struggle with throughout life. She is teaching me how to go after everything with the attitude of royalty and humility.”

Certion has also impacted the lives of students outside of FASTrack.

Christilian Turner, a senior psychology and social work major and fundraising chair of Omega Phi Alpha, has known Certion for three years.

“Mrs. Jackie has become my safe place on campus,” Turner said. “I can go to her office when I don’t need anything and come out in a better mood, and my life is a little more together. She is that aunt who does not mind putting you in check when need be but also has plenty of love and charisma that’ll turn any terrible day upside down.”



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32127



# Ole Miss riding seven-game win streak after rocky start

**JADE RICHARDSON**  
THEDMSPORTS@GMAIL.COM

Following the Rebels' victories against Samford and then-No. 18 Oklahoma State last weekend, the Ole Miss softball team is on a seven-game win streak, sitting at 21-7 on the season.

Although the Rebels got off to a rocky start, losing six games in the first three weeks of the season, they have improved tremendously since and have only lost one game this month to then-No. 14 Arkansas.

“To be a returner and know how it felt to get swept by (Arkansas) last year and to open up playing them the first SEC weekend this year and to take the series from them at home feels amazing,” sophomore Jessica Puk said.

The Rebels’ success has been bolstered by an explosive offense. Throughout the season,

senior Kylan Becker has consistently been a standout at the plate, leading the SEC in hits and triples. Becker currently has a team-high batting average of .460 that ranks seventh in the SEC. Additionally, Becker is ranked in the top 10 of the SEC for on-base percentage, runs scored and stolen bases.

Earlier this month, Becker was named SEC Player of the Week after her standout performances at the plate against Pittsburgh, Nicholls State and Central Arkansas. Becker went 11-17 while scoring 7 runs and batting in another 7. Becker recorded 1 double, 1 triple, 1 home run, 2 walks and 5 stolen bases.

This past weekend, Becker broke the single-season record for triples with 6 on the season and became the Ole Miss all-time leader in career triples, with 13 overall.



FILE PHOTO: CAMERON BROOKS

Ole Miss softball players cheer on their teammates during a 2016 game. The Rebels have won the past seven games they have played in this season and will go up against the Gamecocks in South Carolina this weekend.

Puk and senior Brittany Finney are currently tied for the team-lead with 6 home runs apiece.

“During my at-bats, I tell myself to trust my swing,” Puk said. “The only thing I’m focused on is being aggressive to a pitch that is in my zone. When I hit a home run, it is more of an outcome of all the work that I put in day in and day out.”

Junior Molly Jacobsen set a new career-high with 11 strikeouts against the Oklahoma State Cowgirls. Jacobsen has pitched 66.0 innings this season and has struck out 66 batters and walked 9 to earn an ERA of 1.17, the best on the Rebel squad and the fourth best in the SEC.

Jacobsen, a Des Moines

Area Community College transfer, said the level of talent in the SEC is a step up from junior college.

“The hitters are better, so I have learned a lot pitching at this level,” Jacobsen said. “I have to execute my pitches and take it one pitch at a time.”

Despite her success so far this season, Jacobsen said she doesn't feel any added pressure from her teammates to perform at that level.

"I believe we can learn something from each game we play — whether it is a win or a loss," Jacobsen said. "We focus on our preparation and trust our stuff. I believe if we buy into that preparation and trust our abilities as players, we will be successful."

This weekend, the Rebels will travel to Columbia, South

Carolina, to face the South Carolina Gamecocks. The Gamecocks' record matches the Rebels at 21-7.

The Gamecocks will rely on their offensive stars to try to end the Rebels' win streak. Sophomore Jana Johns is currently batting .432 with 32 hits, 6 home runs and 25 RBIs. In addition to Johns, six other Gamecocks are batting over .300, and the team has racked up 40 home runs this season.

Defensively, the Gamecocks' pitchers have a 3.08 ERA and have given up 77 earned runs — 30 more than the Rebels.

The first matchup between the Rebels and Gamecocks will take place at 1 p.m. Saturday. The following two games will take place at 5 p.m. Sunday and 6 p.m. Monday.

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- 10 Ariel's predecessor
- 14 Detective Pinkerton
- 15 Hairless
- 16 Taboo
- 17 Summer ermine
- 18 Coloured part of the eye
- 19 Intersects
- 20 Peninsula in the NE Soviet Union
- 22 Tennessee \_\_\_\_ Ford
- 23 South American country, famous for Macchu Picchu

24 Out-of-date  
26 Castle follower  
29 Cattle ring  
31 River inlet  
32 Eccentric  
33 Achy  
34 Jughead's pal  
38 Sub station?  
40 Affirmative reply  
42 Illustrious warrior  
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46 God of thunder  
49 Campaigned for  
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50 Fannie \_\_\_\_  
51 Fine-tune

52 \_\_\_ Plaines, IL  
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59 \_\_\_ evil...  
60 Pertaining to  
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65 Shipping deduction  
66 Wile E. Coyote's  
supplier  
67 Brooklyn's \_\_\_ Island  
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70 "Oklahoma!" aunt  
71 \_\_\_ were  
72 Formerly, once  
73 The Wreck of the  
Mary \_\_\_

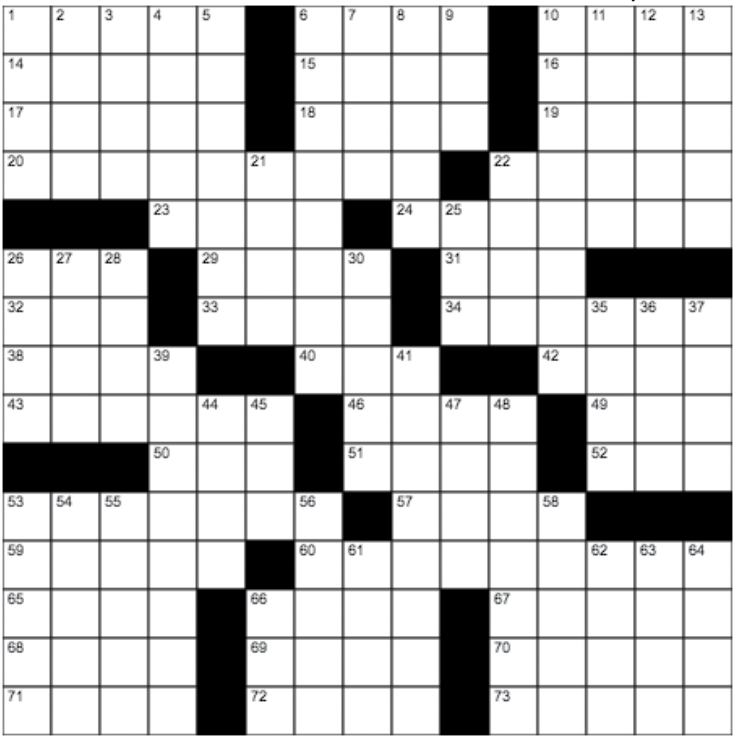
**DOWN**

- 1 Face covering
- 2 Neighbor of Sask.
- 3 Grab, slangily
- 4 Civil rights org.
- 5 National songs
- 6 Death notice
- 7 Like some chocolate
- 8 Troy story
- 9 Begley and Wynn
- 10 Make gradual inroads
- 11 Dog
- 12 Loosen
- 13 Gave a measured amount

## SOLUTION TO 3-18-2019 PUZZLE F

S	H	R	E	E	W		S	T	A	T	I	O	N	E	R
E	T	A	P	E			M	A	L	A	C	H	I	T	E
A	L	O	N				E	M	O	T	I	O	N	A	L
S	E	L					T	R	A	C	E		O	U	T
							E	N	E	S	C	O			
							R	E	T	A	I	L	E	R	
							A	L	M	O	S	T			
							O	B	S	O	L	E	T	E	
							A	M	A	L	G	A	M		
							R	E	N	A	T	A			
							A	S	S	E	N	T	E	D	
							N	Y	S	E					
							U	L	M						
							C	O	I	N					
							R	E	S	E					
							A	D	Z	E	S				
							A	C	R	O	S	P	I	R	E
							A	C	E	R	A	T	E	D	

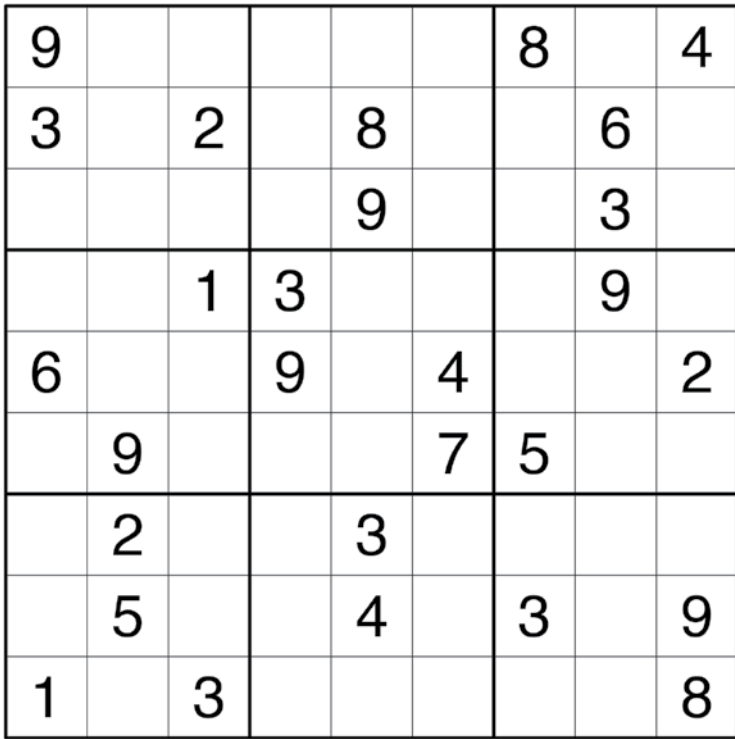
21 Suffix with buck	45 So-so grade
22 Chieftain, usually in Africa	47 Lulu
25 Notable period	48 Decreased
26 Pop	53 Port of old Rome
27 Perfect place	54 Legumes
28 Just lying around	55 Vive ____!
30 Molars, e.g.	56 Furnishings
35 Cattle group	58 ____ Mio
36 Dies ____	61 December day, briefly
37 Ages and ages	62 To Live and Die ____
39 Impending	63 Swerve
41 Least lengthy	64 Fictional Jane
44 Othello villain	66 Peer Gynt's mother



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Puzzles by KrazyDad

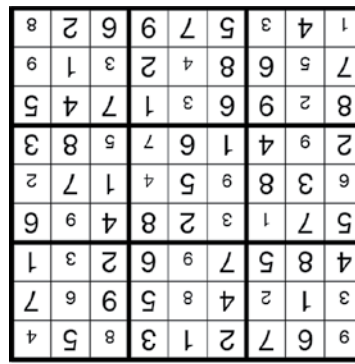


## HOW TO PLAY

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 with no repeats.

### DIFFICULTY LEVEL

# INSANE





MEN'S BASKETBALL

# Kermit Davis follows new path, returns to the Big Dance

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Kermit Davis and the Ole Miss Rebels are back in the tournament and looking to cause some chaos.

It's well-documented that Kermit Davis and his staff have been the driving force behind the resurgent Rebel hoops squad that went 10-8 in the league, giving teams like Tennessee and Kentucky fits, just a year after finishing at the bottom of the conference standings. Davis has the SEC Coach of the Year award and a fresh contract extension to back that up.

Davis's stellar coaching job has guided Ole Miss to its ninth appearance in the NCAA Tournament and first at-large bid since 2002. Davis is no stranger to the Big Dance, and he'll tell you himself that this is the expectation for his teams. He's led five other squads to the tournament: the first in 1989 in his debut season at Idaho and the most recent in 2017 at Middle Tennessee.

In the five seasons that have resulted in trips to the tournament, Davis has generally found success in the same way, using experienced upperclassmen to lead a few complementary freshmen and sophomores. In the one-and-done era, it's usually the other way around for Power Five teams.

However, the actual journey to the tournament

has been different for Kermit Davis this year. Every one of his previous tournament teams has had to win more than 25 games, win the regular season conference title or win the conference tournament to make it to the dance. This team has won 20 games, finished sixth in the regular season and lost in the second round of the SEC Tournament, but made it to the tournament comfortably with a higher seed than any of Davis's previous teams.

"It was a first for me," Davis said on Monday. "Obviously, I've been in the Conference USA and the Sun Belt for the last 16 years, where one loss would almost affect your whole opportunity to maybe get a chance to play in the NCAA Tournament, so it's nice to be in a league that's so well respected."

While the meeting between Ole Miss and Oklahoma on Friday is an even matchup, it will be the first time a Kermit Davis-led team goes up against a team with a lower seed in the dance. Davis has managed a 2-5 record as the underdog in the tournament, advancing past the first round in 2016 and 2017.

His 2016 Middle Tennessee squad entered the dance as a 15 seed and stunned the 2 seed Michigan State in what was the biggest upset in the history of the tournament at the time. They'd later fall in the second



PHOTO: KENZIE RICHMOND

Kermit Davis, recently named SEC Coach of the Year, has successfully led the Rebels into the NCAA Tournament.

round to Syracuse, who would advance to the Final Four.

In 2017, the Blue Raiders defeated 5 seed Minnesota as a 12 seed and lost to 4 seed Butler in the second round. Butler advanced to the Sweet Sixteen that year.

This also isn't the first time Kermit Davis has surged a program into the tournament in his first season at a school. Davis led the Idaho Vandals to a tournament appearance in his first coaching job. Both the 1989 and 1990 Idaho teams were 25-6 and got into the tournament as 13 seeds. Both teams were bounced in the first round, and Davis left for Texas A&M the next season. Idaho hasn't been back to the tournament since.

Should this Ole Miss team have the same fate as the 1989 and 1990 Vandals and get eliminated in the first weekend, it's still an enormous accomplishment for Kermit Davis and the team.

A victory over Oklahoma

in the first round will likely give the Rebels a Sunday date with Kyle Guy and the top-seeded Virginia Cavaliers, a team that has only lost three games all season. Two of the Cavaliers' losses came against the stacked Duke squad, and the third was last week in the ACC Tournament semifinal against Florida State.

"It's very exciting for us," Davis said. "I'm so happy for our players and fans to get an opportunity to play a really good Oklahoma team."



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MEN'S BASKETBALL

# Kermit Davis, Ole Miss agree to new contract extension

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Ole Miss and head basketball coach Kermit Davis have agreed in principle to a new four-year contract extension, according to a release from the university.

The extension comes exactly one year after Davis was introduced as the Rebels' new head coach.

Davis was named SEC Coach of the Year in his first season in Oxford, leading the Rebels to their first NCAA Tournament bid in four years. The Rebels are 20-12 overall and 10-8 in the SEC. Kermit is the third active SEC head coach to win at least 20 games in their first season.

The timeline for the change of trajectory for Ole Miss basketball has been heavily sped up and the expectations have been raised after Davis's first-year results. Multiple people around the program said Kermit made it clear to them that this would not be a rebuilding season from the very beginning.

"Coach Davis has quickly established a very

high standard for Ole Miss Basketball, and he's building our program for long term success," Ross Bjork said. "He's the perfect fit for our university, and we wanted to show a strong commitment to his leadership."

Ole Miss saw one of the biggest turnarounds for a Power Five team in 2019 after a tumultuous finish to last season with 12-20 overall record going 5-13 in the SEC.

Andy Kennedy elected to resign from his position after a loss to Missouri that extended a five-game skid on the tail end of the season. However, the writing was on the wall for the winningest coach in Ole Miss history before the season when administration announced Jeffrey Vitter and Ross Bjork declined to extend his contract.

The fanbase was initially disgruntled, but the argument from the administration was that Andy Kennedy failed to win consistently on the court and on the recruiting trail toward the end of his tenure.

Davis hit the ground running as soon as he was hired, preparing the team for a trip to Canada to play some of the top teams up North. Division I teams are

only permitted to take such preseason trips once every few years, and Davis used that favorable timing to install his system and, more importantly, get players recruited by Andy Kennedy's staff to buy into his notoriously demanding team mentality.

"This has been one of the most rewarding years we have ever spent in college basketball. The Ole Miss spirit in Oxford, throughout our great state and the SEC footprint has been really amazing," Davis said. "To watch our staff, players and fan base connect in such a way to set The Pavilion attendance record is greatly appreciated. We will work to grow Ole Miss Basketball into a national brand."

Davis was able to bring Ole Miss back to the Big Dance for the first time in four years comfortably with an 8 seed using almost the same roster as last year's squad.

The success in his first season in Oxford along with the security of a long-term extension will give Davis immense leverage when he's sitting down with recruits, which should give Rebel fans confidence for the future as he brings in players to



PHOTO: KENZIE RICHMOND

Just one year after Kermit Davis was introduced as men's basketball head coach, he agrees to a four-year contract extension.

fit his system.

The Rebels will face Oklahoma in the first round

of the NCAA Tournament on Friday in Columbia, South Carolina.

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